

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is requested in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion.

Claims 1-6, 9, and 10 are pending. Claims 7 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 8 was canceled previously. Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 are amended. Support for the amendments to Claims 1, 4, and 6 can be found in Figs. 3, 4, and 6, for example. Support for the amendments to Claims 2 and 5 is self-evident. No new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 2-7 and 9-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as indefinite. Claims 1-7 and 9-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Rosenquist et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,530,736, herein "Rosenquist").

Regarding the rejection of Claims 2-7 and 9-10 as indefinite, that rejection is respectfully traversed by the present response.

As Claim 7 is canceled, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claim 7 is negated.

Claims 2, 4, 5, and 6 are amended in accordance with the language set forth in the outstanding Office Action. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claims 2, 4, 5, and 6 as indefinite is overcome.

Regarding the rejection of Claims 1-7 and 9-10 as anticipated by Rosenquist, that rejection is respectfully traversed by the present response.

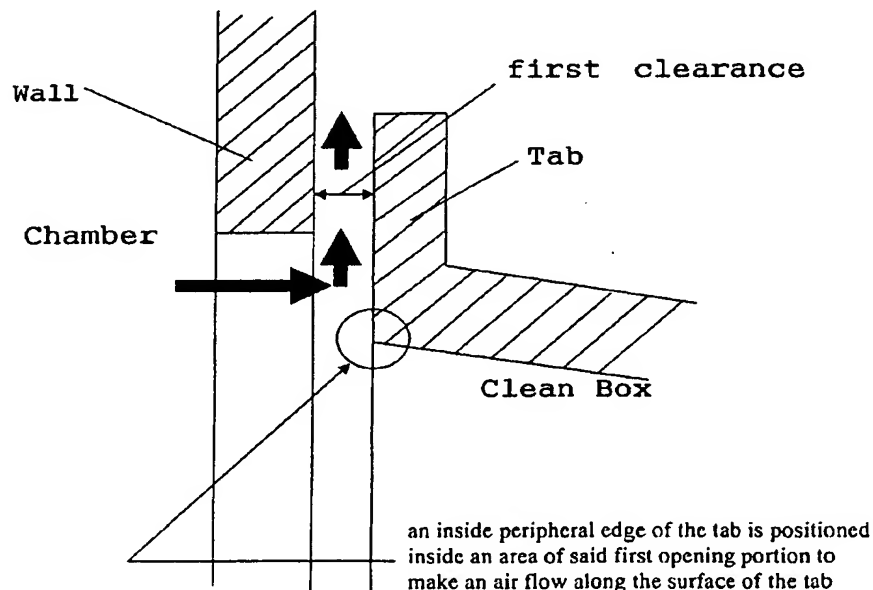
Amended independent Claim 1 recites, in part:

a first opening portion formed on a wall of the chamber, for communicating with an outside of the chamber, the wall opposing the opening of the clean box which allows loading or unloading the wafer between the clean box and the chamber, wherein when the wafer transferring operation is performed, the clean box is fixed to overlap the tab of the clean box over an outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed with a first clearance formed around the entire perimeter of said first opening portion,

wherein an inside peripheral edge of the tab is positioned inside an area of said first opening portion to make air flow along the surface of the tab,

and wherein the first clearance is defined by a predetermined constant distance along an entire perimeter of the opening of the clean box between a surface of the tab and the outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed.

The invention recited in amended Claim 1 is directed to an apparatus in which **i)** when the wafer transferring operation is performed, the clean box is fixed to overlap the tab of the clean box over an outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed with a first clearance formed around the entire perimeter of said first opening portion, **ii)** an inside peripheral edge of the tab is positioned inside an area of said first opening portion to make an air flow along the surface of the tab, and **iii)** the first clearance is defined by a predetermined constant distance along an entire perimeter of the opening of the clean box between a surface of the tab and the outside surface of the wall on which the first opening portion is formed.



One benefit of the invention recited in amended independent Claim 1 is that airflow passing through the first clearance is induced along the tab surface because air coming from the inside of the chamber of the mini-environment portion first hits the tab surface and then it

is bent in a direction along the side tab surface. This airflow from the inside to the outside is helpful to prevent particles from coming into the inside of the clean box.

In contrast, Rosenquist describes a clean box fixed with a first clearance from a wall on which an opening is formed. Rosenquist fails to disclose that ii) an inside peripheral edge of the tab is positioned inside an area of the first opening portion to make air flow along the surface of the tab. Rather, in Rosenquist air flow passing through the first clearance cannot be induced along the tab surface because there is no block to bend air along the tab toward the outside of the apparatus. It is clear that in Rosenquist, air comes from the inside of the chamber and flows into the inside of the clean box. In Rosenquist, the beneficial airflow to prevent particles from coming into the inside the clean box described above does not occur.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent Claim 1 and each claim depending therefrom patentably distinguishes over Rosenquist for at least the reasons discussed above.

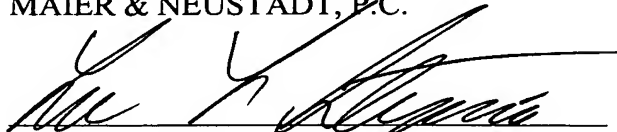
Amended independent Claim 4 recites substantially similar features to those discussed above regarding amended independent Claim 1, and amended independent Claim 4 and each claim depending therefrom patentably distinguishes over Rosenquist for at least the same reasons as discussed above regarding amended independent Claim 1.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-6, 9, and 10 is earnestly solicited.

Should Examiner Moore deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, she is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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